

## **SOUTHWEST REGION TYPE – 3 INCIDENT COMMAND TEAM - TEXAS**

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A 49-member team of Hurricane Rita relief workers assembled Friday at Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge. The team relied upon the refuge and the communities of Lago Vista and Jonestown to set up a temporary command center to gather emergency response information, receive emergency relief assignments and from which to deploy early Sunday morning. The team's mission is to provide emergency access in communities damaged by Hurricane Rita.

"The team needed an inland location for staging operations; early information indicated this would be a logical choice," said refuge manager Deborah Holle. "The refuge was able to support the emergency workers' logistical needs, but the local restaurants and merchants were invaluable for providing their meals and last-minute purchases."

The Service's Southwest Regional Type 3 Incident Command Team brought heavy equipment, chain saws and personnel from Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas to clear downed trees and debris from roadways to provide emergency relief access to communities in Rita's wake. A special response team is attached to the incident command team to address security and law enforcement issues.

Agency representatives are actively working with the Texas Emergency Operations Center to determine appropriate mission assignments.

The full team has been dispatched to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge where it will base its operations for restoring access to hurricane-damaged communities. Following the immediate community emergency access mission, the team will work to restore access at National Wildlife Refuges.

"We were fortunate to have Refuge manager Deborah Holle as our agency's representative to the EOC," said Incident Commander Ralph Godfrey. "Deborah's contacts with the EOC, the refuge staff's efforts and facilities and the local communities' support all made staging our operations here ideal. They've all contributed to our hurricane relief efforts."

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